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28 JUL 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Printing Services Division, OL

SUBJECT : Comments on Agency Microform Planning

REFERENCE : Memo dtd 30 Jun 70 to C/PSD/OL fr Chmn/RMB,
Subject: Request for Comments on Microform
Planning

1. Having read the various papers written on Agency microform planning, it is this writer's opinion that too many of the problems have been lumped together in an attempt to apply a "total systems approach" and that this, in turn, inhibits action on the individual problems. This memorandum attempts to sort out and redefine some of these problems and suggests a course of action.

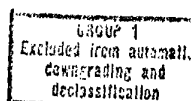
2. Problems:

a. In reading DD/S memo dated 7 November 1969, subject: Inventory of Microform Systems and Equipment; DD/S Diary Note dated 9 January 1970; and DD/S memo dated 15 January 1970, subject: Records Storage--Microfilm Program, it is clear that the overriding problem is that of records storage and the crisis resulting from the accelerated accumulation of the Agency's inactive files. On 7 November 1969, concerned with the storage problem, the DD/S said, "...I propose to determine the feasibility of converting large volumes of records material to some type of microform." In the Diary Note of 9 January, he speaks of "...the massive creation of records in the Agency..." and "...the promotion of a microfilm program for Records Storage." On 15 January 1970, he speaks of "...developing a system for the microfilming of Agency records to be stored at the Records Center."

b. A stated requirement of such a system would be uniformity both in the production of the microforms and in the indexing to permit the use of common equipment, such as readers, and to permit cross use and servicing of records between Agency components.

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c. Other related problems which are of a longer-range nature are now under discussion, such as:

(1) The Agency's overall approach to the use of microforms (see Attachments 3 and 4);

(2) The feasibility of standardization in the Agency's ongoing microform systems for active records; and

(3) The need for central management.

3. Background:

a. The immediate problem of records storage is concerned only with inactive files--those already [REDACTED] and those scheduled for retirement. An inactive file, by definition, is a closed file in which interfiling of new material has ceased and which has a diminishing rate of recall of documents. Such a file must be readily accessible, but its low activity rate does not justify its inclusion in an automated storage and retrieval system. For the same reason this file, if converted to microfilm, would not warrant the use of unitized microforms such as aperture cards or microfiche. Thus, roll microfilm seems to be the logical choice for inactive files (if they must be filmed) and it is also the least expensive. (If the flow of hard copy inactive files [REDACTED] could be stopped by conversion of the files to roll microfilm, the existing hard copy holdings [REDACTED] would be gradually diminished as their destruction date came due, and the storage crisis would then diminish. This "flow" or net growth is estimated at 6,000 cubic feet or 12 million pages per year. However, there is a great reluctance to take this course of action because of numerous objections posed by the various Directorates, as follows:

(1) Microfilming solely for the purpose of miniaturization (space saving) is not cost-effective unless the material is to be retained for 30 years (GSA criteria) or possibly 15 years (Agency Records Management Officer criteria). Shelf filing of hard copy is the alternative.

(2) Only when a file is already incorporated into an active microfilm system can it be retired cost-effectively as a microform, since the miniaturization is already accomplished.

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(3) Microfilming of inactive records, if attempted, would be the responsibility of the Directorate of Support alone. To be effective, the job must be done at a central location (Printing Services Division) by a permanent crew of 22 persons. The budget and Table of Organization (T/O) would require substantial increases, and the overall cost would be "horrendous." (Eastman Kodak Company pricing of approximately \$142.00 and \$39.50 per cubic foot of film for planetary and rotary filming, respectively, is being quoted as a basis for costing.)

(4) Indexing of microfilm files is an almost unsurmountable task; i. e., a "bottomless pit."

(5) Rotary microfilm cameras are not suitable for any portion of the task.

(6) Initiation of microfilming projects of this nature, i. e., inactive files, should await completion of current Agency studies (including use of outside consultants) to insure compatibility and standardization, and to obtain overall policy guidance.

4. Views, Comments and Opinions: In this writer's judgment, many of the above statements for various reasons are not valid and some are the result of a misunderstanding of the DD/S objectives. The following comments are offered for the record in rebuttal.

a. Cost-Effectiveness

The existing criteria for cost-effectiveness are no longer applicable. The Agency's problems regarding records storage are unique. There are many trade-offs to be considered in comparing hard copy vs. microfilm for storage; for example, the recent decision to invest \$600,000 to obtain an additional 38,000 cubic feet of shelf space [REDACTED] which will accommodate only 6 years' accumulation of hard copy files, the existing restriction against further construction of buildings for records storage, and the costs and the security risks involved in the daily transporting of boxes of classified materials to and from

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Headquarters when requested. All of these factors and many others tend to make microfilm storage more attractive for the unique problems of this Agency. Attachment 1 is a cost comparison which indicates that microfilm may indeed be extremely cost-effective.

b. Retirement of Files from Active Microform Systems

It is obvious that the retirement of files already on microforms is the most cost-effective procedure of all. Unfortunately, because of the "state of the art," the application of microfilm systems to the complex and varied active files of the Agency will, in all probability, not occur rapidly enough to overcome the storage problem (by providing records for retirement already on microfilm). Thus, for the foreseeable future, most of the files will still be in hard copy form as they become inactive.

c. Methods and Costs for the Filming of all Newly Inactivated Files

For many years, the microfilming of records has been successfully carried out by the several Agency laboratories and, in addition, by numerous other components using borrowed cameras and clerical personnel, summer help, WAE's, contract employees, etc., with technical and processing support from the Printing Services Division and other laboratories. If the task of microfilming 6,000 cubic feet per year does indeed require the equivalent of 22 man-years, a decentralized approach, with some "on-site" filming adjacent to the files, would permit the use of large numbers of clerical personnel on a part-time basis who were familiar with the individual files and who could absorb much of this work as they have in the past, as a routine clerical task and a temporary inconvenience, without an increase in the staffing. If the offices which create and operate the individual files knew in advance that they, also, would have (with the RMO) mutual responsibility for converting it to microfilm as it became inactive, then greater discipline would probably be exercised in the maintenance of the file. Each of the laboratories should also be utilized to its fullest extent by scheduling the filming of files on a monthly quota basis. Thus, the concept of having

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DD/S accept the entire burden, film in a central location and create a separate operation with 22 persons does not appear to be desirable if the "horrendous" costs are to be avoided. Attachment 2 describes a plan for the microfilming of inactive files with minimum budget and T/O increases.

d. Indexing

This task should be no more difficult for roll microfilm than for indexing of the inactive hard copy files. Microfilm readers equipped with odometers permit indexing of the film to any degree desired. The lookup or access time is less than that of hard copy. The development of standardized, uniform indexing which would permit cross use of the records is a job for which the Records Management Branch is well qualified.

e. Rotary Cameras

These cameras are fully adequate for the recording of inactive files for storage. There are thousands in daily use today. The Agency uses 11 of them with excellent results. With proper operation and maintenance of the camera and with proper film processing, the film quality is completely acceptable. Provisions for manual and automatic exposure control are available. The camera will not accept hardback copy or oversize documents, and is not used for two-sided documents. For correspondence and card files, however, the production ranges from 6,000 to 60,000 per day.

f. Waiting for Development of Overall Policy Guidance on Microfilm Operations

In this writer's opinion, there is no reason for further delay in dealing with the problem of storage of inactive files. A decentralized filming program using roll microfilm is feasible, and the means are available to begin such a program. Roll microfilm lends itself readily to standardized format and to standardized indexing. The use of roll microfilm for storage of inactive and vital records is a straightforward application which has been successfully used for no

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less than 35 years. Initiation of roll microfilming projects for inactive files would require neither a broad systems study nor an outside consultant, nor would it conflict with current planning and, thus, it would not have to await the solution to the longer-range problems. Retention of this film at Headquarters would eliminate costs of recalling

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5. Recommendations:

a. That a plan be developed and implemented for decentralized microfilming of Headquarters files as they become inactive, using (as far as possible) existing equipment and personnel. Roll microfilm would be used and carefully indexed so as to meet requirements for cross use.

b. That a 3-year phase-over period be established, at the end of which each Directorate will have stopped the flow of inactive hard copy files [REDACTED] and will have substituted microfilm (with the exception of material to be retained X number of years* or less and other incompatible materials).

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c. That a more aggressive program for the development of new, standardized microform systems which more closely meet the needs of the files in the Agency be initiated rather than attempt to apply inadequate commercial and Agency systems currently available (see Attachment 3).

d. That pilot programs using microfiche be encouraged and subsidized in the Agency to gain more understanding and wider user acceptance.

* To be determined after further costing studies, probably 4 to 6 years.

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[REDACTED]
Chief, Systems Staff, PSD/OL

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